CONTACT: Denise Schneider/Ata Younan **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** 312.443.5151 or [Press@GoodmanTheatre.org](mailto:Press@GoodmanTheatre.org)  **JANUARY 24, 2024**

**AFTER 50 YEARS AT GOODMAN THEATRE, ROCHE SCHULFER TO RETIRE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO**

**ON AUGUST 31, 2024 AND CONTINUE AS SENIOR ADVISOR THROUGH THE GOODMAN’S**

**CENTENNIAL SEASON LAUNCH (SEPTEMBER 2025)**

**\*\*\*OVER FIVE DECADES, SCHULFER HAS PRODUCED 400+ PLAYS, NEW WORKS AND MUSICALS;**

**ESTABLISHED *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* AS AN ANNUAL TRADITION EXPERIENCED BY 2.5 MILLION PATRONS OVER**

**46 YEARS; AND “GUIDED THE GOODMAN THROUGH THE ARTS STORM OF THE CENTURY” (*CHICAGO TRIBUNE*)\*\*\***

(Chicago, IL) After an unparalleled, decades-long career leading executive operations for one of America’s flagship theaters, **Roche Edward Schulfer** will step down as Goodman Theatre’s Executive Director/CEO at the completion of the 2023/2024 Season. His retirement follows 50 years of service at the Goodman, beginning in 1973 in the box office and serving in his current position since 1980—during which time he helped the 98-year old organization become an independent, not-for-profit resident theater company; oversaw 400+ productions (including two that earned Pulitzer Prizes and, most recently, the most successful musical in Goodman history, *The Who’s TOMMY*); originated *A Christmas Carol* in 1978 as a holiday tradition that just concluded its 46th annual production; and coordinated the Goodman’s move to a new facility in the theater district in 2000 and the expansion in 2017 with the Alice B. Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement. He will continue as a Senior Advisor to the Goodman through the launch of the its Centennial Season (September 2025). The Board of Trustees has named longtime Managing Director/COO **John Collins** as Goodman Theatre’s new Executive Director, beginning September 1, 2024.

“As Goodman Theatre Chair and President, and on behalf of those who have preceded us in these roles, we congratulate Roche on five decades of service. His entrepreneurial leadership, business acumen and arts advocacy have helped establish the Goodman Theatre we know and love today,” said **Board of Trustees Chair** **Julie Danis** and **President Linda Coberly** in a joint statement. “From helping to manage our transition from the Art Institute to a new building in the heart of the Theater District, to launching *A Christmas Carol* and our newest venture, Dennis Watkins’ *The Magic Parlour*; and much more, Roche’s strategic initiatives and dedication have played a key role in cementing the Goodman as a major Chicago cultural and community organization. We are excited to continue our work with Roche in a new capacity towards our landmark Centennial Celebration.”

Said **Artistic Director Susan V. Booth**, “In my earlier days with the Goodman, Roche provided me deeply meaningful support for my artistic aspirations, and subsequently became my model for what an entrepreneurial and risk-welcoming partner ought to look like in a leadership duo. When I returned here last fall, I discovered a healthy, engaged, ever-evolving organization that had never rested on its considerable laurels. I credit Roche’s astute leadership for that, and I am ever grateful for his friendship and collaboration as I have reacquainted myself with this astonishing theater.”

“I can’t think of anyone who has been more influential on the Chicago theater scene than Roche Schulfer,” said **Michelle T. Boone**, President and CEO of the Poetry Foundation, who has worked with Schulfer since 2001 while she was at The Joyce Foundation. “His leadership extends beyond the Goodman throughout the entire community, in years of service with the League of Chicago Theaters, and in his lifelong commitment to providing opportunity for underrepresented voices on stage and behind the scenes. For more than 20 years, he has been a personal mentor to me, and to so many others, and a trusted colleague and friend.”

“One cannot think of theater in Chicago without thinking about Roche. He has been a major force for artistic excellence in our city, and his impact has resonated to the national theater community and internationally. It’s been an enormous pleasure to partner with the Goodman and with Roche,” said **Carlos Tortolero** President Emeritus of the National Museum of Mexican Art.

“I extend deepest congratulations to my longtime producing partner and friend on his decision to retire as Executive Director/CEO,” said **Robert Falls**, Tony Award-winning director and the Goodman’s immediate past Artistic Director. “Collaborating with Roche for 35 years remains a highlight of my life in the theater. There is no better producer in the American theater, nobody who cares more about enabling artists to do their best work. I’m ever grateful for all he has done to make the Goodman the internationally known theater it is today.”

**A STATEMENT FROM ROCHE SCHULFER**

“My goal has always been to help make Goodman Theatre a place where artists could do their best work, where artists and staff could have careers, and where the theater could have the greatest positive impact on our society. I am grateful to the countless individuals and organizations who have supported the Goodman’s values of quality, equity and community—visionary artists, incredible theater professionals, dedicated board members, loyal audiences, and generous contributors. They make the Goodman’s productions and programs a reality. I am particularly indebted to the following individuals:

* The chairs of the Goodman Board—Stanley Freehling, David Ofner, Irving J. Markin, James Annable, Sondra Healy, Deborah Bricker, Carol Prins, Les Coney, Shawn Donnelley, Patricia Cox, Joan Clifford, Ruth Ann Gillis, David Fox, Jeff Hesse, current chair Julie Danis, honorary chair Albert Goodman, honorary president Lewis Manilow, the board presidents, and life trustees Roger Baskes, Maria Bechily, Peter Bynoe, Paul Dykstra, and James Oates. The commitment of Goodman Trustees and Women’s Board members to the theater’s vision and values is extraordinary.
* The Goodman’s Artistic Collective--Rebecca Gilman, Henry Godinez, Dael Orlandersmith, Steve Scott, Kimberly Senior, Chuck Smith, Mary Zimmerman, and founding members Frank Galati and Michael Maggio. The artistry and talent of these artists is unrivalled.
* The Goodman Senior Leadership Team--Adam Belcuore, Jared Bellot, John Collins, Jay Corsi,

Tyler Jacobson, Dorlisa Martin, Cheron McNeal, Denise Schneider and Lewis Warrick. They are

Incredible professionals who lead the best theater staff in the country.

Goodman’s artistic directors have made the theater what it is today:

* Gregory Mosher, who brought diverse programming to the Goodman and directed premieres of early David Mamet plays including *American Buffalo* and *Glengarry Glen Ross*, providing the theater with an initial national profile.
* Robert Falls, who over 36 years created dozens of amazing productions and education initiatives, including his collaboration with Brian Dennehy on *Death of a Salesman* and the works of Eugene O’Neill, brilliant productions of Chekhov and Shakespeare, many new plays including Rebecca Gilman’s celebrated *Luna Gale* and *Swing State*, and initiating the ground-breaking School Matinee Series with Chicago Public Schools. My gratitude for our partnership and his friendship cannot be measured.
* Susan Booth, who brings a powerful new vision to the Goodman, building and refreshing our artistic priorities and expanding the Goodman’s commitment to education and civic engagement. Her first curated season, which opened with a city celebration of distinguished playwright Pearl Cleage, has drawn record attendance, marking the most successful fall quarter in more than five years. It is an exciting vision from a terrific artist and leader. I will miss our collaboration.

I am thrilled that Goodman Theatre has selected John Collins as Executive Director. He is an outstanding producer and a terrific person as I have had the opportunity to experience over more than two decades. The Goodman is in good hands with Susan and John at the helm; together, they will take the Goodman to new levels of achievement. Personally, I look forward to the Goodman’s Centennial Celebration and other opportunities to be of service in the years ahead.

Most importantly, I want to thank Mary Beth Fisher for her unconditional love, friendship, support, and the artistry that she has so generously shared with all of us.” –**Roche Edward Schulfer, Executive Director/CEO**

**FROM BOX OFFICE ATTENDANT TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO**

Goodman Theatre has flourished under Schulfer’s executive leadership, with public support growing from $2 million to nearly $8.5 million, becoming one of the nation’s premier arts organizations known for producing innovative work in an inclusive environment, and cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Stand-out credits include the most successful production in Goodman Theatre history: the 2023 major revival of *The Who’s TOMMY* by original creators Pete Townshend and Des McAnuff, which opens on Broadway this spring.

In 1973, Schulfer started working in the Goodman Theatre box office and became Executive Director/CEO in 1980. Since that time, he has overseen more than 400 productions—including more than 200 premieres. He initiated the Good­man’s annual production of *A Christmas Carol*, which celebrated 46 years as Chicago’s leading holiday arts tradition in 2023. In partnership with Artistic Director Robert Falls, Schulfer led the establishment of quality, diversity and community engagement as the core values of Goodman Theatre. During their tenure, the Goodman has received numerous awards for excellence, includ­ing the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theater, recognition by *Time* magazine as the “Best Regional Theatre” in the U.S., the Pulitzer Prize for Lynn Nottage’s *Ruined* and many Jeff Awards for outstanding achievement in Chicago area theater.

Schulfer has negotiated the presentation of numerous Goodman Theatre productions to national and international venues. He coordinated the 12-year process to relocate the Goodman to the Theatre District in 2000. To mark his 40th anniversary with the Goodman, his name was added to the theater’s “Walk of Stars.” Schulfer was a founder and twice chair of the League of Chicago Theatres, the trade association of more than 200 Chicago area theaters and producers. He has been privileged to serve in leadership roles with Arts Alliance Illinois (the statewide advocacy coalition); Theatre Communications Group (the national service organization for more than 500 not-for-profit theaters); the Performing Arts Alliance (the national advocacy consortium of more than 18,000 organizations and individuals); the League of Resident Theatres (the management association of over 70 leading U.S. theater companies); Lifeline Theatre; the Arts & Business Council and Theater Wit.

Schulfer is honored to have been recognized with the League of Chicago Theater’s Lifetime Achievement Award; Theatre Communication Group’s Visionary Leadership Award; Actors’ Equity Association for pro­moting diversity and equal opportunity in Chicago theater; the American Arts Alliance and Arts Alliance Illinois for arts advocacy; the Arts & Business Council for distinguished contributions to Chicago’s artistic vitality; Chicago magazine and the *Chicago Tribune* as a “Chicagoan of the Year”; the City of Chicago, with “Roche Schulfer Day” proclamations by two mayors; the Chicago Loop Alliance’s “Illumination Award,” honoring his commitment to Chicago’s theater district; Columbia College Chicago for entrepreneurial leadership; the Joseph Jefferson Awards Committee for his partnership with Robert Falls; Lawyers for the Creative Arts; Lifeline Theatre’s Raymond R. Snyder Award for Commitment to the Arts; Season of Concern for support of direct care for those living with HIV/AIDS and Vision 2020 for promoting gender equality and diversity in the workplace. He taught at the theater school at DePaul University, lec­tured annually on strategic planning in the arts at Southern Methodist University and frequently consults with local and national theater companies.

Schulfer received a degree in economics from the University of Notre Dame where he served as cultural art commissioner and has conducted seminars on theater management. He received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree from North Central College in 2009. He has presented his celebrated explanation of the economics of the performing arts, *Why Not For Profit Theater,* at more than 20 theaters and conferences around the country over the years. He was born in Chicago and remains a lifelong resident of the area.

**ABOUT GOODMAN THEATRE**

Chicago’s theater since 1925, **Goodman Theatre** is a not-for-profit arts and community organization in the heart of the Loop, distinguished by the excellence and scope of its artistic programming and community engagement. Led by Artistic Director **Susan V. Booth** and Executive Director/CEO **Roche Schulfer**, the theater’s artistic priorities include new play development (more than 150 world or American premieres), large scale musical theater works and reimagined classics. Artists and productions have earned two Pulitzer Prizes, 22 Tony Awards and more than 160 Jeff Awards, among other accolades.

The Goodman is the first theater in the world to produce all 10 plays in August Wilson’s “American Century Cycle.” Its longtime annual holiday tradition *A Christmas Carol*, now in its fifth decade, has created a new generation of theatergoers in Chicago. The Goodman also frequently serves as a production and program partner with national and international companies and Chicago’s Off-Loop theaters.

Using the tools of theatrical practice, the Goodman’s Education and Engagement programs aim to develop generations of citizens who understand and empathize with cultures and stories of diverse voices. The Goodman’s Alice Rapoport Center for Education and Engagement is the home of these programs, which are offered for Chicago youth—85% of whom come from underserved communities—schools and life-long learners.

Goodman Theatre was built on the traditional homelands of the Council of the Three Fires: the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi Nations. We recognize that many other Nations consider the area we now call Chicago as their traditional homeland—including the Myaamia, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac and Fox, Peoria, Kaskaskia, Wea, Kickapoo and Mascouten—and remains home to many Native peoples today. While we believe that our city’s vast diversity should be reflected on the stages of its largest theater, we acknowledge that our efforts have largely overlooked the voices of our Native peoples. This omission has added to the isolation, erasure and harm that Indigenous communities have faced for hundreds of years. We have begun a more deliberate journey towards celebrating Native American stories and welcoming Indigenous communities.

Goodman Theatre was founded by William O. Goodman and his family in honor of their son Kenneth, an important figure in Chicago’s cultural renaissance in the early 1900s. The Goodman family’s legacy lives on through the continued work and dedication of Kenneth’s family, including Albert Ivar Goodman, who with his late mother, Edith-Marie Appleton, contributed the necessary funds for the creation on the new Goodman center in 2000.

**Julie Danis** is Chair of Goodman Theatre’s Board of Trustees, **Lorrayne Weiss** is Women’s Board President and **Kelli Garcia** is President of the Scenemakers Board for young professionals.

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